



RDC and Laboratory host summit on growing regional economy

December 19, 2019

Cooperation between organizations was the theme at this year's Regional Economic Development Initiative (REDI) Summit hosted Nov. 20 at Buffalo Thunder by the Regional Development Corporation (RDC) and Los Alamos National Laboratory.

More than 200 attendees joined college presidents, tribal leaders, mayors, and employers to discuss workforce development and housing issues in the context of a growing economy in the region.

"I was impressed with the openness of all the speakers and panelists from across the region to collaborate and share solutions to the challenges we face, and to build for the future together," says Val Alonzo, executive director of the RDC.

The opening community conversation saw the RDC Board Chair Jennifer Jenkins host a discussion on economic and workforce development issues with Kelly Beierschmitt, deputy director at Los Alamos National Laboratory; Ron Lovato, governor of Ohkay Owingeh; and Bill McCamley, cabinet secretary of the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions.

An education and workforce panel moderated by Jamai Blivin, chief executive of Innovate+ Educate, showcased how collaboration between employers and education institutions is helping to prepare students for work opportunities.

The need for region-wide planning around housing was emphasized in a panel discussion that included mayors Javier Sanchez of Española and Alan Webber of Santa Fe, moderated by Monica Abeita, executive director of the North Central New Mexico Economic Development District.

At the summit, the RDC also honored two high-growth Northern New Mexico companies, Avanyu, LLC, and Golightly Cashmere. Avanyu is a native woman-owned construction company with 23 employees, and Golightly Cashmere manufactures and sells its own knitwear online and through stores in Taos and Santa Fe, with plans to open a new store in Breckenridge, Colorado in 2020.

The event concluded with keynote speaker Dawn Jourdan, executive associate dean and professor at the Department of Landscape Architecture & Urban Planning at Texas A&M University. Jourdan discussed affordable housing and land use and commended

the leaders at the summit for their willingness to plan collaboratively and consider innovative solutions around water usage and land use.

"It's an exciting time for the region," says Alonzo. "Events like the REDI Summit provide a forum for the community to come together and plan how best to take advantage of the opportunities we see."

Los Alamos National Laboratory

www.lanl.gov

(505) 667-7000

Los Alamos, NM

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